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SUBJECT: MONTREAL CONFERENCE WITH THE HAITI DIASPORA (MCHD)
(DECEMBER 10-11, 2004)

11. (SBU) Summary. Members of the Haitian Diaspora from Canada, the U.S. and Europe assembled December 10-11, 2004, to participate in the MCHD. Canadian Prime Minister (PM) Paul Martin emphasized, at the opening of the MCHD plenary session, that his administration's initiative to invite members of the Haitian Diaspora to participate in a conference in Montreal, is the first-ever conference of this kind that the Government of Canada (GOC) has conducted with a diaspora of any kind. The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) served as conference facilitator. GOC officials, upset with a band of persistent pro-Aristide supporters protesting outside the conference venue, denounced allegations that the GOC is attempting to make Haiti a protectorate. (Note: Government of Quebec (GOQ) Premier Jean Charest, reportedly after a rift over the role he would play in the event, was conspicuously absent and is alleged to have banned his team from attending the full slate of the Dec. 11 activities. End note.) Prominent conference themes included: the need to improve security in Haiti in order to move forward with projects (education, democratic reform, health, women's issues, etc.), the plea for the Haitian Diaspora to play a role (ie. provide expertise) in reconstructing Haiti and the call for a "long-term" commitment (in addition to spontaneous humanitarian aid) to rebuild Haiti. PM Martin informed conference attendees that his Administration continue work to maintain a spotlight on Haiti in "La Francophonie". GOC Ministers announced a plan to lead a Haitian Diaspora mission to Haiti (possibly in January 2005). Florida Governor Jeb Bush, invited to attend the conference, sent Deputy Chief of Staff William W. Large to represent him at the MCHD. Montreal Consul General (CG) Bernadette Allen attended the MCHD as observer. End summary.

(U) Opening Night (Friday, December 10).

12. (SBU) FOCAL organizers appeared a bit overwhelmed by the public response to participate in the MCHD. Several dozen pre-registrants (including Montreal CG) among the 400 "by invitation only" guests arrived at the venue to find their names on the registration list at the check-in table, but no credential to enter the conference reception. We initially were asked to wait for credentials to be printed, but were ushered into the reception hall an hour later (still without credential), just a few minutes before the evening's reception commenced. CG learned that a number of persons who had not been invited to the conference managed to infiltrate the evening's event by feigning to be members of the media (showing credentials for "non-existent" community newspapers or radio programs).

13. (U) A demonstration (about 150 persons) outside the venue caught FOCAL organizers and many conference participants by surprise. The daylong snowstorm did not deter persistent Haitian-flag bearing, placard holding pro-Aristide supporters from chanting, drumming and blowing whistles throughout the evening. From five floors above ground level, the non-violent, yet boisterous crowd could be heard in the background as speakers took their respective turns to welcome conference participants. Placards were inscribed with epithets: "Death or Aristide", "Martin + Bush = Accomplices", and the like.

14. (SBU) Reception speakers included: GOC Minister of International Cooperation Aileen Carroll (Conference Co-President), GOC Minister for "La Francophonie" Jacques Saada (Conference Co-President), Montreal Mayor Gerald Tremblay, Quebec Minister of Relations with Citizens and Immigration Michelle Courchesne (on behalf of Quebec Premier Jean Charest) and Haitian Ambassador for Haitians Living Abroad Alix Baptiste. GOC Foreign Minister Pettigrew, unable to attend at the last moment, sent videotaped remarks. All speakers emphasized the critical needs in Haiti, noted the devastating floods that Hurricane Jeanne inflicted in areas such as Gonaives, praised the response of the Haitian community in Canada (notably Quebec) in providing spontaneous humanitarian aid to flood victims, highlighted

the importance of reconciliation and leaving differences behind in order to move forward in Haiti, and expressed the hope that the conference would result in identifying a cadre of professionals committed to long-term work on concrete projects to reconstruct Haiti.

(SBU) (Note: Initially billed to address conference participants, GOQ Premier Charest was a no-show. In July 2004, he and Florida Governor Jeb Bush had highlighted interest in a Quebec-Florida mission to Haiti, in a joint press conference during the Florida trade mission to Quebec. CG learned that Charest, reportedly not pleased with the less than prominent role that the GOC had in mind for him at the MCHD, pulled out of the event on opening night and is alleged to have banned his staff from attending the next day's slate of activities. CG was informed that Charest arranged a private meeting with Interim Government of Haiti (IGOH) Prime Minister Latortue. End note.)

(U) Conference Day, Saturday, December 12, 2004

15. (U) The conference, which closed two hours later than the scheduled 4:00pm closure, was divided into a morning plenary session with a slate of speakers and an afternoon of workshops. IGOH PM Latortue stayed to participate in the conference luncheon. (Note: CG, seated at a table adjacent to PM Latortue, did speak with Interim PM Latortue to reiterate U.S. Government support and convey personal best wishes for Haiti. He appeared genuinely pleased to learn of USG presence at the conference. End note.)

16. (U) The speakers' for the morning session were:

- a) Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin;
- b) Interim Haitian Prime Minister Gerard Latortue;
- c) GOC Minister of International Cooperation Aileen Carroll (Conference Co-President);
- d) GOC Minister for La Francophonie Jacques Saada (Conference Co-President);
- e) Special Representative and Chief of the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdes;
- f) IGOH Minister of Planning Roland Pierre;
- g) Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Interim Cooperation Framework Director Yves Petillon; and
- h) a panel of seven representatives from Haitian Diaspora organizations. The seven organizations and respective representatives, including one each from the U.S. and France, were:

- (1) Regroupement des Organismes Canado-Haitien Pour Le Developpement (ROCAHD), Mr. Eric Faustin;
- (2) Point de Ralliement des Femmes D'Origine Haitienne, Ms. Marlene Rateau;
- (3) Conseil National des Citoyens et Citoyennes d'Origine Haitienne (CONACOH), Mr. Keder Hyppolite;
- (4) Alliance Gonaivienne de Montreal, Mr. Olthene Tanisma;
- (5) Federation des Associations Regionales Haitiennes a l'Etranger (FAHRE), Ms. Marie-Carolle Tertulien (in New York City);
- (6) Agence Haitienne pour le Developpement Local (AHDEL), Mr. Romel Louis-Jacques (in Paris); and
- (7) Projet du Premier Congres Mondial de la Diaspora Haitienne - Mr. Georges Anglade.

17. (U) Canadian PM Martin, noting that Montreal hosts the largest concentration of Haitians (estimated at 125,000) in Canada, remarked that Haitians have enriched the Canadian mosaic and helped form the unique tie between Canada and Haiti. He emphasized Canadian solidarity with the Haitian people, highlighting Canada's deployment of a stabilization force in March 2004 in response to the security crisis, the spontaneous humanitarian support that Canada provided in response to the recent floods in Gonaives and Canada's role in ensuring that Haiti was given prominence at the Francophone Summit in Burkina Faso. He spoke of Canada's commitment to contribute to the European Union and Francophone Summit project that will focus on improving Haiti's judicial system through training of magistrates and modernizing penal procedures. He stated that Canada will join other countries in financing the 2005 elections, will work with Hydro Quebec to replicate the success story of the Jackmel electrification project (24/7 electricity) in other regions in Haiti and, at the request of IGOH PM Latortue, and will consider financing a rail route that would provide a second transportation means from Port au Prince to the south. He called for reconciliation and national dialogue (to include Lavalas), noting that without securing the peace, it would be difficult to move forward with reconstruction in Haiti.

18. (U) IGOH PM Latortue, stating that only months ago he was a member of the Haitian Diaspora (HD), made a plea for members of the HD to help create a new Haiti. He said the HD holds the key to changing the mentality in Haiti, stated that it is time to recognize the collective interest above individual ambitions and interests. He congratulated the

GOC for the conference initiative, noting that while there is a large Haitian community in Florida, that never before had a meeting of this kind between a government and the Haitian diaspora been conducted. He stated that while spontaneous humanitarian aid is not a bad thing, what Haiti really needs is a long-term commitment that leads to durable solutions. He spoke of the 2005 elections, emphasizing that the leaders in the IGOH have no particular party affiliations and that none of the current leaders would seek political office in the upcoming election. He lamented that past dictatorships had chased away a middle class with expertise that could help build a strong Haitian nation. He urged professionals in the HD to return to Haiti, even if only for weeks or a few months to offer services or expertise. He suggested, for example, that Haitians who are serving as university professors in places like Yale, Oxford, Univ. of Montreal and other places around the world, could return to conduct summer seminars for university students, if unable or unwilling to leave their current professional positions. He added that HD expertise will be needed for the 2005 elections (eg., supervisors, observers), for job creation to enhance the economy beyond the close to US\$1 billion in remittances that the HD sends to family members yearly. Moreover, he suggested that the HD could help the economy by spending tourism dollars, such as retirees escaping the Canadian winters to summer homes in Haiti or youth vacationing in Haiti. He acknowledged that there are security concerns in Haiti, but stated that the media distorts the story and that much of the security problems are localized. To further his plea for a return to Haiti, he stated that "Israelis aren't afraid to return to Israel", and questioned why Haitians should be afraid to return home.

9. (U) MINUSTAH Ambassador Valdes informed the conference attendees that MINUSTAH initially lacked adequate troop strength to significantly reduce the violence and that deployments had been difficult, including workdays with 16-hour shifts. He said the security situation has improved with the 5000 troops in place and will soon be better when the deployment level reaches 6300 troops. He reported that the local police are dedicated, but that it has been difficult for them to maintain security because the local population has not liked the police and has not had trust in the local police force over the years. He suggested that Latin American countries sent troops to Haiti because Latin Americans can empathize with Haitians, having shared similar experiences in their respective countries' histories. When asked whether or when MINUSTAH troops will "disarm the thugs", Valdes responded that "taking away the arms is the easy part, the tough job is building people's trust to have a dialogue without arms." He added that at some point in time, if necessary, MINUSTAH will cut off communication between groups that promote violence and intimidate Haitian citizens. When asked how MINUSTAH could aid a women's group in Montreal that has been having difficulty getting its several containers of goods delivered to Gonaives, Valdes did not provide a response.

10. (U) The several HD organizations on the panel that Canadian Special Advisor on Haiti Denis Coderre moderated provided overviews on the types of expertise their respective organizations could provide. Many spoke of the possibility of providing professional skills in education, health care, nutrition, promoting women's rights and human rights. One representative suggested his organization could offer a study to ensure the successful coherence of projects for long-term success (such as a ten or fifteen year plan). Many representatives expressed concern that Haitians in Haiti may be resistant to help from the HD. The PAFHA representative said that Haiti is not well-known in France, that PAFHA is conducting an educational campaign to generate interest in Haiti. There was consensus that a Haitian middle class needs to drive development in Haiti.

11. (U) The afternoon workshops were designed around five themes:

- a) political governance,
- b) national dialogue,
- c) economic governance and institutional development,
- d) economic revitalization and,
- e) access to basic services.

Each workshop addressed three questions:

- (1) In light of your theme, what role can the diaspora play?;
- (2) What conditions are needed to achieve a successful intervention by the diaspora?; and
- (3) In the long term, bearing in mind that the Interim Cooperation Framework ends in 2006, what are the perspectives for a long-term intervention by the HD?

(U) After each workshop revealed its results, the consensus reached in the plenary wrap-up was:

- a) that a survey of expertise within the HD is needed;
- b) that there should be a moratorium on deporting

criminals presently in Canada and the U.S. to Haiti;
c) that the Haitian population in Haiti needs to be prepared for the return of the HD, that the IGOH should install a "welcoming organization", so that the HD is not seen by the local population as a band of intruders;
d) that the HD needs to respect Haitians in Haiti and not return as experts with arrogant attitudes;
e) that FOCAL should provide e-mail followups to the MCHD;
f) that the Interim Cooperation Framework should be inclusive for all the HD groups;
g) that there should be continued inter-diaspora coordination among Haitian groups in Canada, the U.S. and Europe;
h) that there should be humble and useful dialogue in the development of concrete projects;
i) that there should be a creation of a HD Secretariat (with financing) or permanent structure where members of the HD can continue to send ideas and suggestions;
j) that youth should not be excluded or pushed away when offering support and services to Haiti;
k) that women must be allowed to support reconstruction in Haiti; and
l) that a long-term commitment (ten, fifteen or twenty years) is needed for Haiti, not just a cycle of spontaneous responses to humanitarian needs.

¶12. (U) In the closing of the conference, Canadian Special Advisor to Haiti Denis Coderre and GOC Minister of "La Francophonie" Jacques Saada, visibly angry about the continuous band of boisterous pro-Aristide demonstrators, emphasized they were addressing their remarks to the few dozen persons who had protested throughout the day. Coderre asked the demonstrators to "stop the hate", said it was a "ridiculous lie" to suggest that the GOC is attempting to make Haiti a protectorate. Saada said he twice tried to speak with the demonstrators, but that some hurled insults at him and others turned their backs on him. Saada also announced that he and Coderre plan to organize an official Haitian Diaspora delegation to Haiti, possibly in January 2005.
ALLEN